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Rethinking the Mind - Prof. Mark Solms

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Machine Learning Street Talk

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Overview

Prof. Mark Solms, a neuroscientist and psychoanalyst at the University of Cape Town, presents a radical challenge to mainstream consciousness research. Drawing on decades of clinical and experimental evidence — from decorticated animals that retain emotional behavior to hydranencephalic children who display clear affective responses without a functional cortex — Solms argues that consciousness originates not in the cerebral cortex but in ancient brainstem structures, particularly the reticular activating system and periaqueductal gray.

The conversation traces a sweeping intellectual arc from Spinoza's dual-aspect monism through Shannon's information theory to Karl Friston's free energy principle, building the case that feelings are the organism's fundamental means of monitoring its homeostatic state. Solms contends that the hard problem of consciousness only seems intractable because the field began with the wrong modality: vision, which is not intrinsically conscious, rather than affect, which is.

Tim Scarfe and Solms explore the implications for AI, the failures of behaviorism, the neuroscience of psychoactive substances and REM sleep, and Jaak Panksepp's SEEKING system as the dopaminergic engine of curiosity and exploration. The result is a compelling argument that understanding consciousness requires putting feelings back at the center of brain science.

Intro: Challenging vision-centric approaches to consciousness

(No transcript segments for this topic)

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(No transcript segments for this topic)

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The SEEKING system and exploration in neuroscience

(No transcript segments for this topic)

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